

V.I. Dept. of Finance Faulted for Failing to Pay National Guard Pensions on Time

National Guard leaders expressed frustration over DOF's failure to release pension payments to former VING members, leaving about 45 pensioners unpaid despite funds being allocated in the budget

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The V.I. Dept. of Finance has once again been blamed for its failure to make payments to yet another group of Virgin Islanders. This time, it is former members of the V.I. National Guard who qualify for their pension package.

The government of the Virgin Islands sponsors a \$200 monthly pension for V.I. National Guard members, designed to bridge the financial gap until they reach the age of 60. This pension is provided because National Guard members must complete 20 years of service and wait until they turn 60 to begin receiving regular retirement payments. The \$200 monthly pension helps to

support these members financially during the interim period, acknowledging their long-term commitment and service to the territory.

During the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance meeting on Tuesday, Senator Dwayne DeGraff raised questions about the status of pension payments. "Have those individuals waiting for their pensions been paid?" he asked. Adjutant General Kodjo Knox-Limbacker responded that only some pensioners have received payments in recent months, with "about 45 of them" still awaiting payment.

According to Knox-Limbacker, pensioners are paid on a regular schedule, but only when "funds [are] available." "The money is in the budget to pay them," he explained, but clarified that VING is "waiting for [the Department of] Finance to pay it out." It's a similar arrangement that is causing lags in the payment of some [64 vendors owed by the National Guard.](#)?

VING says it has proof that they've done their part to facilitate payments. "We do have this spreadsheet validating that these payments are into the ERP system and approved, but it's just presently awaiting a check payment," said Nikita Ward, executive director of the Office of the Adjutant General.

"The reality is, this is a prioritization of what needs to be paid for the general government," Knox-Limbacker said, shifting responsibility to the Department of Finance. "We create a priority list...however, we're waiting for it to be paid out," he told Sen. DeGraff.

This response did not surprise the senator, who told the adjutant general that he wanted the reason for untimely payments placed on the record. Nevertheless, Sen. DeGraff remained perturbed. "They do their 20 years, they're entitled to this money, and they don't get it."?

Senator Franklin Johnson also expressed his frustration. "Some of these individuals have said they haven't been paid this year. This pension is very small and is meant to bridge the gap until they reach the age of 60." Sen. Johnson mentioned that he continues to receive calls from qualifying pensioners who are still awaiting payment. "These men and women leave this territory and put their lives on the line for us, and this is bad treatment," he stated.

"I wish I had a checkbook that I can actually write them a check, but unfortunately, until Finance pays them, I can't change that status," Knox-Limbacker said, lamenting the current status quo.